



NEWS

**For Immediate Release
September 12, 2002**

Draft Environmental Assessment Document for Durango, Colorado, UMTRA Ground Water Project Site Available for Public Comment

(Grand Junction, CO)—The U.S. Department of Energy Grand Junction Office (DOE–GJO) announces the availability of the draft *Environmental Assessment of Ground Water Compliance at the Durango, Colorado, UMTRA Project Site*. The draft *Environmental Assessment* provides information concerning the potential effects of the proposed ground-water compliance strategies for the Durango Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Ground Water Project site.

The Durango UMTRA Ground Water Project site is a former uranium-ore processing site located 0.25 mile southwest of the city of Durango in La Plata County. The former millsite consists of two geographically contiguous, but hydrogeologically separate, areas: the mill tailings area and the raffinate ponds area. Both areas are located on the west bank of the Animas River and are immediately southwest of the intersection of U.S. Highways 160 and 550. DOE–GJO in Grand Junction, Colorado, manages the UMTRA Ground Water Project.

DOE has proposed separate compliance strategies for the mill tailings area and the raffinate ponds area to better address the constituents of concern in the ground water at each area. The targeted compliance strategy for the mill tailings area is to allow natural flushing of the aquifer to decrease contaminant concentrations. In conjunction with this strategy, DOE would ensure that in-place institutional controls are maintained and would continue ground water and surface water monitoring. Institutional controls protect public health and the environment by limiting access to a contaminated medium. Based on computer modeling and historical trends, the concentrations of ground water contaminants—cadmium, manganese, molybdenum, selenium, sulfate, and uranium—in the shallow aquifer would decrease to acceptable levels within the 100-year timeframe allowed by law. Extensive water and sediment sampling from the Animas River

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indicate that ground water from the site has had no significant adverse impact on the Animas River water quality.

The targeted compliance strategy for the raffinate ponds areas is no further remediation in conjunction with the application of supplemental standards for the ground water constituents. Supplemental standards may be applied on the basis of the criterion of limited-use ground water because of elevated selenium concentrations that are a result of natural sources and are not related to historical uranium-ore processing.

Reference copies of the draft *Environmental Assessment* will be placed in the Durango Public Library in Durango; the Cortez Public Library in Cortez, Colorado; the Mesa County Public Library in Grand Junction, Colorado; and the DOE-GJO Public Reading Room in Grand Junction by **September 16**, 2002. The document will also be available on the DOE-GJO website at www.gjo.doe.gov/ugw/sites/co/durango/durango.htm. Copies may be requested by contacting DOE-GJO toll-free at 1-800-399-5618. Any public comments on the draft *Environmental Assessment* should be forwarded to the address below, no later than **October 16**, 2002:

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